

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

THEME:

King Hezekiah's sickness, prayer, and healing.

REMARKS:

“**In those days**” places this event at the time the Assyrian came against Jerusalem.

- “Trouble is like bananas, it comes in bunches” is a true bromide.
- “When it rains it pours” is another adage with an element of truth.

It is well to keep in mind that while Hezekiah was beset by the danger of the Assyrian host, he was plagued by a boil. His deliverance from death must have been prior to the destruction of the Assyrian host.

It was while the siege was going on, and the answer to prayer must have encouraged his heart relative to Isaiah's prediction of the coming deliverance of Jerusalem, Hezekiah reigned 29 years, he reigned 15 years after this event, so that his sickness was in the 14th year of his reign. Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem in the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign.

Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them (Isaiah 36:1).

All of this happened in the same year—sickness of Hezekiah and siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian.

OUTLINE:

1. **PRAYER of Hezekiah when Told He is to Die.** Verses 1-3
2. **PROMISE of Healing and Miracle of the Sun Dial of Ahaz.** Verses 4-8
3. **POEM of Praise of Hezekiah when He was Delivered from Death.** Verses 9-20
4. **PRACTICE of Medicine in Connection with Healing.** Verses 21-22

COMMENT:

Verse 1—In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

The sentence of death is delivered to Hezekiah by Isaiah. It is true that this sentence of death rests upon each one of us, although we do not know the day nor hour, **“It is appointed unto man once to die.”**

This is a divine date. If each one of us knew the exact time, would it not change our way of living?

Recently, a very fine young minister was told by his doctor that cancer had recurred and that his days were limited, he sent out a letter to some of his friends, and I was privileged to be included in that list. Many of us were shaken, and some of his statements were profound. We give this brief quotation that you might know the thinking of a man under the shadow of death:

“One thing I have discovered in the last few days. When a Christian is suddenly confronted with a sentence of death, he surely begins to give a proper evaluation of material things. My fishing gear and books and orchard are not nearly so valuable as they were a week ago.”

Verse 2—Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord.

Again we see Hezekiah going to God in prayer. The very fact that God told him of his death led him to believe that mercy might be extended.

Verse 3—And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

This is the ground on which the Old Testament saint prayed. This was accurate. See II Kings 18:4-7 for an historical confirmation of the character of Hezekiah. Did you note verse 5 carefully?

He trusted in the Lord God of Israel: so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him (II Kings 18:5).

Verse 4—Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying,

Verse 5—Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

God did hear and answer his prayer for an extension of his life by 15 years.

It was not for Hezekiah’s sake but for David’s sake. Our prayers are heard for the sake of great David’s greater Son.

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily. I say unto you. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you, hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:23-24).

Verse 6—And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

Note God ties in His deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian with Hezekiah's deliverance from death, his answer to one request will encourage the believer's heart that He will answer the other requests.

Verse 7—And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken;

Verse 8—Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

This is an additional sign and is one of the great miracles of Scripture. It corresponds to Joshua's long day (Joshua 10), and some associate them in interpretation. Some conservative scholars attempt to localize the fulfillment as connected with some miracle in connection with the sun dial. The word for sun dial here is literally "to go up." It is translated "steps" in Exodus 20:26, and is translated "degrees" in Psalms 120 and 126.

Certainly God was removing the darkness from the steps of Hezekiah and was letting him continue to walk in the light of life. Dr. Jennings gives this literal translation of verse 8:

Behold I will cause the shadow of the steps to return, which is gone down in the steps of Ahaz with the sun, backward ten steps and the sun returned ten steps by the steps which it had gone down.

Verse 9—The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

The following verses are a fine thesis on death by one who was very near. Many believed that Hezekiah composed Psalm 116.

Verse 10—I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

"Grave"—Hebrew *Sheol*.

It is sometimes translated hell (Habakkuk 2:5). It is the destination of human life. The body goes to the grave; the spirit goes to one of two places—paradise or place of torment.

Verse 12—**Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.**

Verse 13—**I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.**

Hezekiah was 39 years of age.

Verse 18—**For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.**

This life is the place of decision.

Verse 20—**The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.**

This thesis was set to music. The question arises at this juncture whether Hezekiah should have died at the appointed time. The account in Chronicles has an interesting verse in this connection after his illness.

But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem (II Chronicles 32:25).

The next chapter reveals that he played the fool after his recovery. There is a third consideration, which leads us to believe that Hezekiah should have died at the first time. Manasseh, his son, was 12 years old when he began to reign, which means he was born after Hezekiah's sickness.

Verse 21—**For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.**

Actually, the healing of Hezekiah does not contain the element of miracle, as did the sign of the sundial. A lump of figs was used as a poultice.

What was Hezekiah's sickness? "**Boil**" is the Hebrew *shechin* and means "*to be hot.*" It is called elsewhere the "**botch of Egypt**" (Deuteronomy 28:27). It was Job's disease. Could it not be what is diagnosed today as cancer? At any rate, it is a picture of sin which brings death. Only God for Christ's sake can deliver from death.

~ end of chapter 38 ~

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